

A black and white photograph of a young Native American child, likely a girl, standing in a grassy field. She is wearing traditional regalia, including a large feathered headdress with a single long feather on top. She has a circular shield or drum with a sunburst design on her chest, and a large feathered skirt. She is holding a small object in her hands. In the background, there is a wooden fence and some people sitting on the grass.

HALLMARKS

Fall 1996

The Artic

Dear Emerson, what would happen
in the polar reaches of the globe, giant ball,
where only the only incandescence is of
skins that flare with the chafing of winds?
Your exiled despair lives there, little wounded
eyeball. "We see you not..." or how the old
shunning goes, in a cave, cave dweller.
Existing by and only with the shadows of fat.
There is no light here (we shout it.) Despair
and sunken faces and Death white lilies, we,
the paper thin ones hide our last matches under
rocks to keep them (hidden?—no, dry.)
The northern lights fly above us like an ethereal
god. Aurora Borealis, I call your to stay if you
are able and stop you schizophrenic laughter
from once more crossing our skyline. Ours is a life
of missing the circle. Things seem to be maniacly here.

Where there is light there can be no despair.
Where there is light there is Truth.

But Emerson, here our bodies have blued
and we can look through each others' chest cavities
to the other side of a narcoleptic five-minute day.
We seem to be true and vacant of all things.
Clean and cold is a harsher measure of reality,
In our transparency, in the absent of light,
we mistaken our frozen breaths full of hot wastes
for a soul.

But you must peel yourself away from sedimentary things.
But you must see that God spelled backwards is Art.

If there is an oversoul here, we would wear it
like a thick woolen shawl with tassels the color
of an immortal blood (which blood, iced or fired?)
It, like the flash of a thousand bulbs or a giant red
mushroom that topples the sky, might keep us
warm and sleepy and part of a stronger sphere—
But our eyes, here, strain to meet the horizon
all the back to the commencement of the minute hand,
but all they can see is ice.

LAUREN O'NEIL(12)

Those Three Small Words

(a monosyllabic piece)

He loves her. He can't tell her that. She thinks that she might love him. She has not told him that. He looks at her a lot, when her eyes are not on him. She does not know that. In his mind, he tells her that she is all that he dreams of. He can't, though. She thinks that he is not in love with her. She thinks that he does not care for her at all. She wants to know if he likes her voice, her smile, and her red hair. She can't ask him though.

It is a cold day. They walk on the trail by her house. It is wet with fresh, white snow. She scoops some snow up with her glove, and throws it at his chest. He laughs. She runs. She goes to the front of the house and hides by the thick pine tree. He comes to look for her. She jumps out and grabs his shins. He falls to the ground. She laughs. He smiles at her. He thinks that she looks sweet with snow on her hair and face. She thinks that his cold, red nose and long wool ski hat make him look like an elf. They do not say these things. She props her head up on her hand, and looks at him. He looks back at her. "What is on your mind?" she asks with a sly smile. "Not much," he says back to her. She drops the idea right there. She is let down. She is hurt. She is not on his mind, or so she thinks. He looks at her. She looks sad. He puts his lips next to her ear and says, "I love you." Her cheeks turn pink. Her skin feels warm. She looks at him. Her eyes are bright. Her smile is big. She tries to speak, but he puts his hand on her mouth and says, "I know."

BRITANY FOSTER (12)



ALISSA SWEARINGEN (12)

Divine Postcards

Momma always taught me that
If I read my Bible and
If I bent down on my knees and
If I held my hands just so,
That God would know
I was a good little girl
And answer my prayers.

I knelt at my bed
Every night and asked,
Why my bicycle still had training wheels?
Why chickens lay eggs first and don't just lay chickens?
Why the sky isn't red because red's my favorite color?

I peered into the mailbox,
Expecting a postcard from heaven
with Gabriel and his trumpet
Captioned "Wish you were here"
On the front
And answers, ordered and concise,
On the back.
And signed
Sincerely, God.

JULIA BROWN (12)

ars poetica

a poem is slack, transformed
scalloped animal fat, idiot pumps, and rubber elbows.

a poem is fine and nervous,
tired and trembling, holding stillness.

a poem is beautiful fingers, on hands
like wild birds. simple lessons in each and every book.

a poem is grease grey and crying. face up, screaming
from a thin tense throat.

a poem is a merciless grasp. a groan swish
foam frayed, scrap of wisdom.
a kind of stillness that comes through kindness.

KELLY JACKSON (11)



AMBER WORRELL (12)

cincinnati

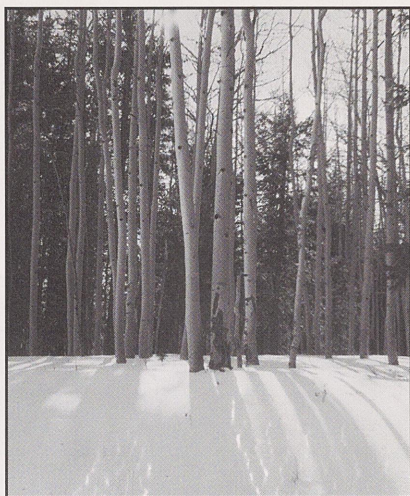
that man in the two thousand dollar armani suit stands up there each sunday and preaches pressure, pressure, pressure. and tells me to accept all kinds of the lovely and the ugly while he's smoothly smothered and thickly caked with beige make-up icing, sliding his manicured hand across the small patch of hair atop his head. and there's a mirror up in the pulpit so he can take a look at himself at any point during his sermon, just to make sure he looks ok. and i'm in my yellow dress with my sleeves and just because there's a dress code here, and my electric blue velvet tank top will not do and it doesn't fit his rules on how i have to look for my lord in my lord's house. and he tells me that my friends who don't know jesus are on their way to hell and it's my fault they're going because i didn't pressure them into his love. i sweat and become silently sick in my brain but more in my heart. i feel as though i'm watching one of those channel seventeen deals where the men wear toupees and the women have fake breasts and the plants and the microphones and the money and the so-called salvation are the focus rather than his love and his open mind. their god is a bastard of a god who judges and chooses and picks. and i have atheist friends and jewish friends and muslim friends who are more christ-like than you buddy.

TALLU SCHUYLER (11)

The Fire Lords

We used to bend over backward
to make bridges.
The uncut grass taped feet to the earth
On the blue lawn, at dusk,
the little girls with sweet, damp heads and
backs
would run like fire lords
and capture prisoners in bottles.
(the old lady in the castle would watch
them from the window
or balcony).
And the girls would roar
through back alleys
and cut dusty corners,
collecting pebbles between their toes,
Now we wear shoes.

LAUREN O'NEIL (12)



AMBER WORRELL (12)

Sittin' in the Daffodils

Purple. If only my kite wasn't purple. Why not green, or yellow, or blue? Or red... lovely, delicious red? Bren's is red, with big white eyes and tails in every color I can think of. The box said something about a rainbow, but I've never seen a rainbow that looked quite like that kite! I'm always a little disappointed with rainbows anyway.

"Race ya!" Bren bolted out of the porch door this morning. I wish that screen didn't make such a commotion; it hurts my ears. Dad says it wouldn't be so loud if we didn't hold it back so far before letting it go. But I can hardly ever remember not to. Besides, Dad doesn't have Bren hollering and racing out ahead of him all the time.

"Come on", Bren motioned with one hand full of tangled string and her kite clutched in the other. "You're the wicked witch of the west and I'm Dorothy, so try to catch me!" I almost got her too, before I tripped on the sprinkler hose. If my kite wasn't purple I would never have to be the wicked witch of the west, and I never would have tripped in the first place. So, I sat frowning at my dirty skinned knees. Bren sailed back across the yard to me, to tug at my arm. "You're never gonna catch me sittin' in the grass," she taunted. Then she took off again as I noticed that her kite is the exact same color as Dorothy's ruby red slippers. "That explains everything," I made a mental note.

"There's no place like home. There's no place like home. There's no place like home," she began, and didn't even stop after saying it three times like she was supposed to. I couldn't remember any of my lines.

"I'm not playing anymore!" I shouted back, but she didn't care, so I plopped down somewhere in the daffodils (it's my favorite spot) and waited.

"Chicken butt!" I heard Bren retailiate. That's when I got the greatest idea.

"Turkey butt!" I called back.

Bren stopped her wild skipping and stood beside me there in the flowers with her hands on her hips. It was enough then for my comeback to leave her speechless. Besides, I'll catch her another day, and there will be other times for me to be Dorothy. If only I had a red kite...

MEGHAN TALLY (12)

Pawpaw

His whiskers were white and prickly and made me think of the doormat on the porch. His glasses were speckled with house paint and had grease and dirt embedded in the frames. His hair, dripping from the bare top, was milk white, clean, and always combed. My grandfather's teeth were yellowed and one in the front was missing, a window to the blackness of his mouth. The skin on his face and neck was rough from the years of working on the farm, but also soft and pliable, just from the years. I used to mash it up like the play-doh at school with my little hands and he'd smile. Pawpaw's overalls were speckled like his glasses. It was fun to recognize a new color and imagine rooms painted and furnished in the same. He always wore a collared shirt under those overalls, always Easter-egg spotted white with white stitching. Pawpaw had a big stomach. He used to lean way back in his favorite chair and call me over to sit on that big watermelon belly and watch him peel his apple. Pawpaw took the peel off an apple in one long, curly-Q piece, like a spring. I ate the curly-Q; he ate the apple. We shared a Coca-Cola, the kind that comes in green glass bottles. It was good to sit nestled next to his stomach and listen to the apple and Coke rumble deep inside his stomach. When giggles cascaded from my mouth, a shining star appeared in his eye from behind polka-dot glasses. And I knew that a hairy, dirt-stained hand much larger than mine would pet the crown of red curls that tickled my ears, sending me to the kitchen with the empty Coke bottle.

My grandfather and I did more than peel apples sitting in that chair. My mother loves to tell the story of the day I was determined to teach Pawpaw math. I must have been in the second or third grade. The red curls of my earlier years were now strands of thick, strong, strawberry-blond hair, much like Pawpaw's had been when he was little. In those years, a taller girl crawled into Pawpaw's lap, fishing a pad of paper out of the pocket on the front of his overalls. That pad was always there, tattered and torn, with phone numbers of seed supply stores and prospective paint jobs. Pawpaw's pen, gold with an arrow for a clip, rested in the pocket as well. These items were in my hand before I ever rested on this knee.

"Pawpaw, can you add?" I asked him.

The glimmer returned to his eye as he quite seriously replied,

"Well no, I don't think I can. Can you?"

This being exactly the answer I was fishing for, I began drawing small circles and practise problems on the page in an attempt to mimic how my schoolteacher taught me to add. But Pawpaw just couldn't get the answers right, no matter how many times I tried to tell him. We sat in that cool, leather Lazy Boy for a long time, longer than I had ever sat in a math classroom before in my life. Finally, my exasperated mind couldn't take it anymore and I leapt off Pawpaw's lap exclaiming, "Paw, you're the hardest old man to learn anything I've ever seen!" Pawpaw had never laughed so hard in all his life, my mom said.



AMBER WORRELL (12)

Pawpaw (continued)

I wish I could remember that laugh. I've heard people say they never knew such pain as when they couldn't remember how someone's laugh or voice sounded before they died. He died when I was in the fourth grade. My grandmother had passed away six months earlier. The family thinks his body weakened so that the cancer just took over. He asked for me the day he died. Mom picked me up from school without any warning. I took him a basket of silk violets for his room, even though I knew he wouldn't last long. It was cold in the hospital room. He didn't look at all the same as the last time I sat on that big belly. The hospital sheet didn't even bulge. I was a little scared of him, and I never had been before. He beckoned me over and I saw the star in his eye once again, only this time it was a tear.

My aunts and uncles gave the silk violets back to me when he died. They told me that he was waiting to see his "Lil Red" before he gave up. It made my small frame feel responsible and loved all at the same time. I tried to forget that feeling for many years. But now, the silk violets sit out on my dresser, and I try to remember his voice.

JULIA BROWN(12)

Cake: A Sarcastic Memorandum for a Later Tomorrow

I am unfortunately a late-bloomer, though not in the physical sense. I am not worried. I will get my cake and eat it too, even if I have to fight 1,000 women for the fork to eat it with. If there is no fork, I will just put my face right in it, devouring it down to the china plate it is centered on and lick my face afterwards. I will not be a wuss. I will fight for the cake that is mine once I get it. Note: I will have my cake.

My late-blooming status will benefit me later in life. I will not have the heartburn many girls have had after they finished their cake and decided they should not have eaten it. I will not eat too much cake or too big of a piece at a time. Eating what was meant for someone else never tastes as good as if it were meant especially for you. Note: I will not eat anyone else's cake.

Hundreds of girls have tossed their remaining edibles aside when they have had their fill. I will try to sort through the icing and filling. However, I will not eat cold or rotting leftovers. If I should come across some perfectly good cake left by someone whom I trust, I might give it a try, but if its flavor is not for me, I will disregard it, politely. I will not lose my composure. I will not sling handfuls across the room in a tantrum, making a mess that someone else will have to clean up. I will take responsibility for the cake I ruin.

I will not take my bites too quickly. I will chew and taste before I swallow. If I happen to be haphazardly eating and I choke, I will pray that someone will be there to perform the Heimlich. If not, I will help myself as best I can, and if all else fails, I can call a shelter for victims of cake-choking incidents.

I will enjoy my cake when I do eat it. I will not eat so much cake that it will clog my arteries with sugary sweetness or richness that will make me grow fat and miserable. I will not eat cake too frequently. The point of eating cake is for pleasure; you can eat veggies any day for nutrients. Note: Water is always a good way to clean out your system. Use prunes, if necessary.

JESSICA TUCKER (12)

Van Gogh's Bed

My art class ended, unlike my thoughts of Van Gogh.

You step out of bed
onto the slanted yellow floor
where you begin
like pictures on the wall.

Your voice starts
in the unpainted hall,
and weaves into the room
trying to push the walls from you.

You belong in that world
of turbulent colors and slanting lines.
Its chaos balances your mind
and completes your sentences.

I want to paint you into this tiny room,
and protect you with watchful eyes and the wooden frame.

BRITANY FOSTER (12)

In Her View

Noises...Laughter
All Alone
She Hears Laughter
through the phone
walls are speaking
something new
laughter's silent...in her view

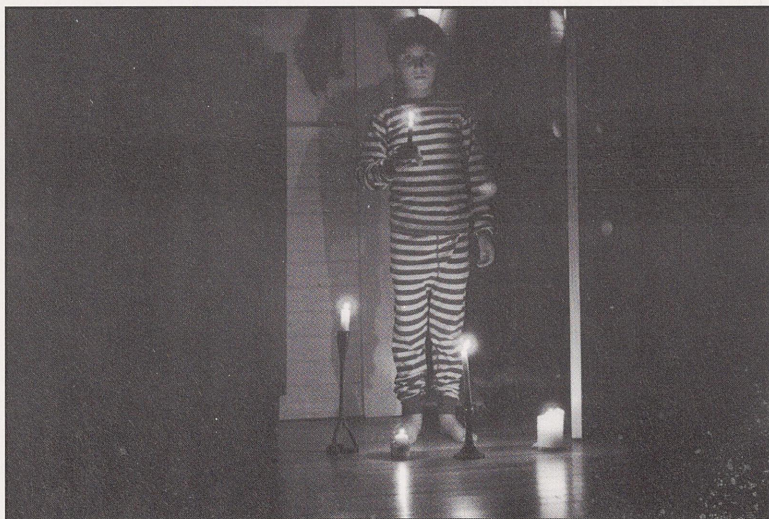
She remembers...some time ago
Man came in her wall at home
Harsh words spoken...eyes were broken
flat backed she laid...eyes were closed

Redhead, lanky, silky tresses
Stunning eyes and long, white dresses
Albino flesh streamed with teardrops
Dress unbuttoned...hear the cops

Man arrested...she alone
Laughter waning...from now on
Redhead, gawky, dry, coarse tresses
Hidden eyes and dead black dresses

Candle light with face exposed
thoughts of crucifixion are proposed
she hears laughter in her memory
Walls are speaking,
something old,
Laughter's silent...in her view
And a story, never told.

LINDSEY SCRUGGS (10)



K.C. BULL (11)

**My Hysterically Unrealistic
Most Perfect Evening**

"Mom! I'm home!" I exclaimed, as I rushed in the door. It was the last day of my high school career. I had tirelessly sprinted the whole five miles home from school because I couldn't wait to show off my straight A+ report card.

"Oh, Honey, I'm so proud of you," she reveled, as she handed me a one hundred dollar bill. "I've got a big surprise for you! Go hop in the limo; you're goin' on a little trip. Jenkins (our head butler) has packed your suitcase along with a little snack. He didn't know whether you preferred caviar and crumpets, or shrimp cocktail, so he packed both." Now thoroughly ecstatic, I kissed Sheba, my panther, good-bye and followed the red carpet to the limo.

Soon we arrived at the airport, and I was escorted to the Concord, which had been reserved for me and dozens of my awaiting friends. Strangely enough, I had to say "Good-bye" to my mom because she wasn't going. "An unchaperoned vacation?" I pondered. "I can live with that." As I boarded the plane, I was delighted to see that Steve, the regular pilot, would be flying that day. After I greeted my many friends, Steve and I chatted awhile in the cock-pit as I gracefully guided the plane. Before too long, however, I was forced to hand over the wheel and return to my seat so that I wouldn't figure out where we were headed. This plan was fine with me because waiting in the first class lounge was a gorgeous massuese and manicurist, all part of my "frequent flyer" bonus package.

After a few luxurious hours I was led off the plane blindfolded, and driven to my mysterious destination. When the limo came to a halt, I stepped out and felt sand squishing between my toes. As the blindfold slipped off, the beautiful Monte Carlo beach was revealed to me. As if I wasn't already frightfully close to a heart attack, my heart skipped a beat when I saw before me Brad Pitt, a beautiful cabana, Brad Pitt, lots of food, Brad Pitt, the crystal clear Mediterranean Sea, and...Oh my gosh! Brad Pitt was standing two feet in front of me! As I looked around I saw several other divine stars. And then...my eye fell on my one true love...there was fresh mozzarella with tomatoes and basil at the buffet! Allowing my ever powerful nose and stomach to lead, I rushed, I mean, I delicately inched my way over to the mozzarella and indulged.

A few minutes later, around 9:00, a band started playing. As I observed people swimming and dancing in their bikinis, it occurred to me that I was still in my school clothes- jeans and a T-shirt. "Jenkins!" I yelled. "Where's my suitcase?" I quickly grabbed it out of his expectant hand and ran for the bathroom. Delighted to find my new bikini right on top, I threw it on and returned to the party. I was by no means self-conscious when I noticed people staring at my extremely large breasts. It was impossible to hide the grin on my face as I mingled with the stars and, of course, my many friends.

Suddenly, in the midst of tangoing with Chris O'Donnell, I noticed a beautiful ship heading towards the beach. Once the ship had anchored, a tall, dark, and handsome figure leapt from the deck. As he emerged from the sea, I immediately recognized the leopard skin bikini...It was Fabio, my Latin Lover, whom I had met the previous summer in Spain! When he picked me out of the crowd (by my breasts, of course), he embraced me and removed a rose from between his teeth. After he pecked me on the cheek...we all went to our separate hotel rooms and were in bed by ten o'clock.

KATIE KAMINSKI (11)



ALISSA SWEARINGEN (12)

A Bedtime Story

we pretended we were kings and queens of make believe
hiding in the back yard behind bushes, garbage cans
you shot me with a watergun
we would sit beneath trees to sell lemonade to thirsty runners
with bits of grass for flavouring
but it soon became apparent that other things were more important
than childish games
or priorities had to be well placed or we'd lose them
minorities in our little kingdoms we listened
or attempted to pretend we'd heard bickering parents droning teachers counsellors
and shrinks and little flies that buzzed about our decaying minds trying to peck out
our eyes
soon intellectual escapes became our venue
hunting in coffee shops for questions to answers
music was our propaganda of hippie morals and teenage angst
then I'd hold your head when you'd had too much to drink
your patina black hair contrasting with the white bowl of the toilet rim
cold to touch, caressing your cheek where it lay
(if only the lines of our decisions were as distinct, without grey blurred edges)
your paradigm had shifted, senses stimulated by ubiquitous chemicals
but everything's unresolved
we never killed our dragons but hopped on their backs
were burned by serpentine fire
and now we can't seem to find the eject button
let alone stop and rewind
instead we've caught ourselves in an ever recurring b-rated flick
where the fairy tale kingdom has dissolved into revolution.

DEVON WILLIAMSON (11)

Night's Melody

In the twilight hours of day
The time when night is veiled,
Creatures of brightness come to lay
And the Nightingale begins to wail.
The sun slowly sinks into the clouds
As it says good-bye to the sky,
And the silence is broken with the deafening sounds
Of the wind whispering its lies.
The moon awakes to look down at Earth
While heavens like cinder on a log,
And no one could ever count their worth
As night sings her bittersweet song.
For I heard a voice crying from the deep:
Come join me, love, in my endless sleep.

KIMBERLY MCKINNEY (9)

Sunday

I was thinking about the ordinary, everyday life through which I plod. I forget to jump and run, as if I am afraid to lose my breath. I forget to rejoice and cry and ponder. I forget to be intense. I feel like I am riding in a 1982 Buick 5000 series, harvest gold upholstery, trapped in the back on some family trip. Say I'm going to a funeral or something. Something to which I don't even want to go, that makes the ride in the car last forever. I count the yellow stripes on the pavement until my eyes itch from staring, and my head aches from their bluriness. I count and count and count, losing my number or starting over. Those little yellow lines never stop; I could count for my whole life and never reach the end of the line. I dream and hope and wait for the trip to be over, for the road to end, for the last yellow line. But when it does, nothing changes.

And so goes my life: from event to event, waiting for the future to be better than the present. It is a deceiving little devil, the future. It charms you with its glamour (of your own imagination), playing little movies in your head. You too can be a part of those movies if you wait...wait for the next thing to come.

I am staring at their blank faces, the room has become full of them. They blend together and separate, ebbing and flowing with my eyesight, until I finally disregard them altogether. My glance shifts to the walls. I stare at the patterns of cracks and paint chips, my eyes lost in the sea of taupe paint. I stare at these walls as if they held the secrets of life. But all I am really doing is distracting myself.

I know it's there. I know the pretty mahogany ("fine choice," the man had said) must be shining and the gentle curves of the sides sloping down. And I know Elizabeth must be in there, I really don't need to look at the stupid box.

Instead I listen to the rabbi. As he elaborates on death and dying and whatever else rabbis are supposed to say at these things I wonder: they always say the most wonderful things about the person...what could they possibly say at my funeral? I contemplate the things I have done, the attributes of my character, and the reputation I have earned. But nothing equates the character and contributions as those of the deceased. No, if eulogies hold words so admirable as these, mine would be empty.

My eyes are glazed over and burning, and I let them fall where they will. They settle on the casket. But I'm not really seeing it, I'm seeing Elizabeth. I think of that little body, and her shining hair. There were sparkles in her eyes, matching her smile, and I think of those too.

I think about what her first prom would have been like, her first car, her graduation. I dream in this "what if" kind of wonderland until it quickly rolls away, like the salty tear, down my cheek.

I wasn't her sister or mother or best friend. I didn't even know her that well. I could not tell you what her middle name is or was, or even her favorite color. So in some ways, I feel I should somehow be inferior to those who were closer to her. As if I should say, "Oh, you must be hurting much more than I." As if those others deserve more comfort and sympathy. But I am hurting too.

Now I love that car ride. And I relish the harvest gold upholstery. I savor wiggling my toes to relieve the pins and needles stuck in my sleeping feet. I enjoy the trip minute by minute. And not for one moment do I stare at the pavement, to count those little yellow lines, to wish the time to pass me by.

MANDY LOMAX (11)



JULIA BROWN (12)

Neosporin for the Soul

The woman was what some of the more narrow people I know would call a "typical New Ager." You could define her that way - long, flowing skirt around bare legs and feet, toe rings, silky tank top, crystal on a chain around her long neck, jet-black hair coursing down to her waist in shining waves. We were as we usually are - my friend, Whitney, dressed like some sort of Renaissance-era vampire type except for her characteristic leather biker jacket to mark her as a punk, me in my favourite outfit: short gray dress, gray argyle tights mostly obscured by a pair of knee-high black patent leather boots with a two-inch heel. I raised my glow-in-the-dark cats-eye glasses as we entered the dimly lit store, resting the frames on the brim of my tall black and white top hat. As the door swung shut in a flurry of wind-chimes, the woman behind the counter rearranged her legs out of the lotus position and stood up. We took in each other.

"Welcome," she said in a husky voice. In her favor, she did not give the fish-eyed stare Whitney and I usually attract from those over twenty when we go out, "Can I help you with anything?"

Whitney and I glanced at each other. I nodded ever so slightly, and a disarmingly cute grin spread across her face, replaced a moment later by a practiced, serious look so totally unlike her that I nearly found myself laughing. She moved into the woman's line of vision carefully.

"Do you have Neosporin for the soul, please?" she asked solemnly.

I almost pitied the woman as a look of confusion entered her deep blue eyes, too blue even to be fake. "Almost" is the key word.

"Excuse me?" she queried, sure that she had misheard. I glared at Whitney, who I knew was repressing an elfin chuckle. She calmed herself and said, again, "Neosporin. For the soul", speaking clearly such that there could be no mistaking her words. The woman's puzzlement deepened.

"Do you mean Chicken Soup for the Soul? The inspirational book?"

Whitney looked as if she were about to explode with giggles so I decided to take it from there.

"No ma'am", I said quietly. "Neosporin for the soul." When she said nothing, I continued. "Do you mean to tell me you haven't heard of it?"

"What is it?" she asked skeptically, beginning to think that she was being mocked. I gave her one of my precious wide-eyed looks guaranteed to dispel doubt, or your money back. "Describe it; I might be able to help you," she sighed, motioning for us to sit down on the cushions lining the wall. She adjusted her neck with a sharp "pop" as we sat down. I poked Whitney in her side. "Help me here," I hissed. Whitney groaned,

"Neosporin for the soul. It's a light blue gel with just a touch of silver to it; tastes like mint and smells like lilac."

The woman shook her head and asked, "How do you use it? What's it for?"

Whitney nodded at me, and I hesitated before I spoke.

"You put it on your forehead before you go to sleep. It's a healing agent, like Neosporin is for cuts."

She sat with her head tilted, her skirt billowed around her, wearing that expression people get when a thought eludes them. Finally, she smiled in recognition.

"Yeah, we've got that stuff. It's new, right?"

It was our turn to exchange puzzled looks. What was this? Was she simply playing along, or had we accidentally come up with something that really existed? I raised an eyebrow, but Whitney frowned at me.

"Let her go on," she mouthed, "She must have something like it if she's going on like that."

"What if she's lying?"

"What if she's not?"



DEVON WILLIAMSON (11)

Neosporin for the Soul (continued)

"But..."

"C'mon, I want to see..."

As much as I hated to admit it, so did I.

"I just didn't recognize the name you used for it. Sure, hold on."

She disappeared through a beaded curtain, re-emerging a few moments later. I heard the small clicking of the beads as she laid a small, dull silver tube in my hand and clasped my fingers around it.

"Check and see if that's it," she said smiling.

I glanced at Whitney. She gave me an expectant look, grinning like a goofy jack o'lantern, as I unscrewed the lid, releasing a faint scent of flowers into the heavy air of the incense-filled room. Squeezing a bit of the stuff into my hand, I sniffed at it. Definitely lilac. As I held it out to Whitney, she breathed deeply and nodded at me, still unsettled, but exhilarated by the very eeriness of the circumstances. I was too confused to appreciate it, but she has never been prone to that particular affliction.

"This it?" I asked Whitney.

"Think it is," she said. Smiling gently, the woman settled onto her cushions, brushing the curtain and letting it whisper as she leaned back.

ELIZABETH MCCLELLAN (11)

if my father's father had not died
 when my father was fifteen and his
 mother had not given him a guitar
 as an outlet for his emotions
 and my father had not written
 poem after poem after sweet song
 and his talent had not been found out
 by my mother's boyfriend's friend
 and if my father had not accepted the invitation
 and had not played at his party that night
 on Penn state campus
 and my dad hadn't spilled his drink
 on himself and my mom hadn't helped him get clean
 and they had never touched
 or gone to New York city together,
 then I would not be the me who is the me
 who is the creativity of my father
 and the sensibility of my mother
 and I would not bite my flop of fingernail
 and I would not sing and i would not write
 and I would not be sitting in the comfortable wood
 here in this musty room today.

TALLU SCHUYLER (11)

Plunge

You have a place inside me,
 wedged between
 my third and fourth rib.
 you sit precariously,
 your feet dangling over the edge.
 your wrists lay softly
 against a pink lung, and
 with each breath you
 rise and fall,
 gently.

I don't know
 what made you slip.
 but when you fell,
 you fell with vengeance.

desperate to take hold
 you plummeted past my heart;
 where with one last effort
 you sank your fingers into it.

The pain was left unmeasured, and
 i pushed you out with
 one
 hard
 pump.
 into space you fell,
 with my blood on your hands,
 far beyond the
 reaches of my
 stomach.

KELLY JACKSON (11)

Who I Am...

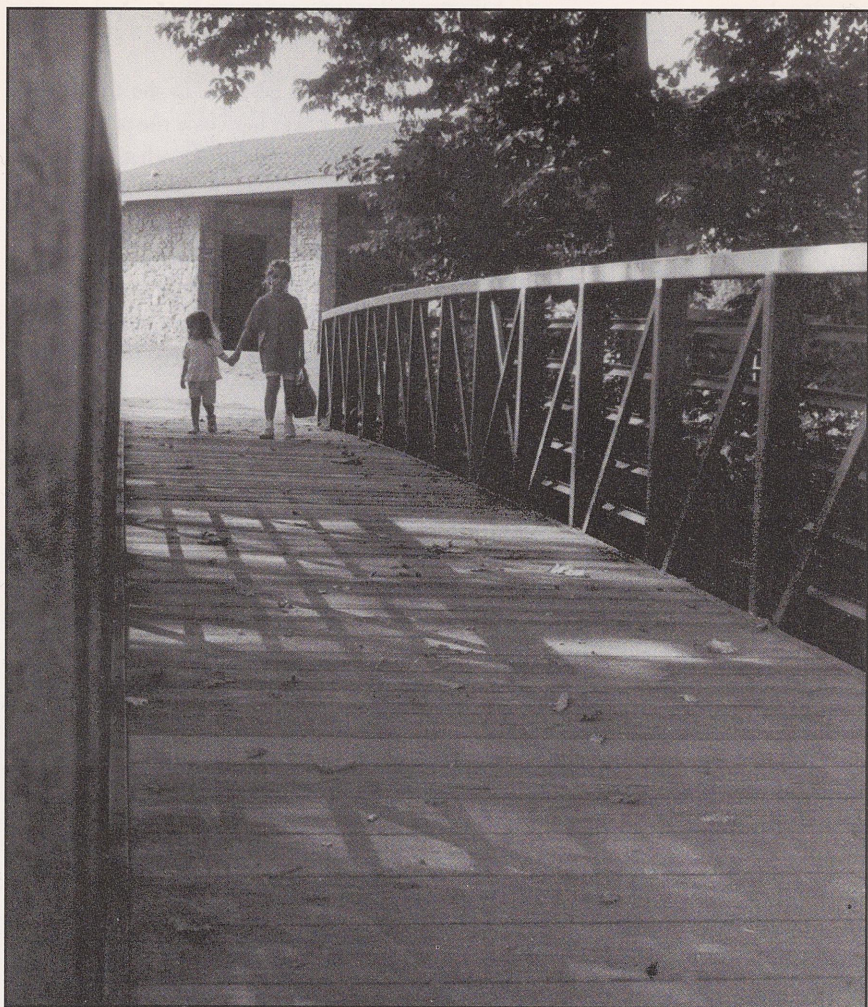
I watch her hands move around her face with dramatic gestures, as she cradles the phone between her ear and her shoulder. I do that too. I hear her voice rise and fall like musical scales, as it is interrupted by fierce laughter. I picture him on the other end of the wire nodding his head methodically, with an expression that denotes both amusement and dismissal. I too have that face. I look at her belt that matches her shoes, earrings that match her rings, and her dress in colors that compliment both her complexion and the season. I smirk as I realise that my fingernails and toenails are painted the same shade of pink. I imagine him thumbing through the book that is his companion and refuge for the day. I thumb through mine as I think of him. Her voice swells to fill every corner of the kitchen, as she reels off sassy comments and sarcastic retorts. A moment later she is laughing. I laugh at her as I glance at the wadded up Kleenex in my hand that five minutes earlier served as comfort to a problem that I can no longer recall. In my mind I hear him chuckle at her wildness and unpredictability. I join him and laugh at myself. By her replies I guess that he is talking about going to Europe, or visiting Hawaii. In my daydream I pack my suitcase and walk down the beaches and the busy streets of London with him. She rattles off her schedule to him, and complains that once again, she has overextended herself. I shudder at the thought of my own calendar that is covered with ink and responsibilities. He looks at his own agenda, and does not reveal his concern or frustration. I do not tell him of mine. She thanks him for the child support check, punches out her pleasant good-byes, and hangs up the phone. I use the same expressions to shout out my farewell to him. She begins to sing the wrong lyrics to her new favorite song. He closes his eyes, and leans back in my chair, and taps his foot to the music on his newest CD. I close my eyes, lean way back in my chair, and hum the correct tune to my favorite song. She tells me that she listened to that song when she was my age, and that I make her feel old. I tell her that she has good taste and that she makes me feel young. He could tell me what year the song came out and how many copies it has sold since then. He would feel that he was teaching me something, and I would feel smart for already knowing the answer. I look down at my long fingers that look like hers, and my short toes that look like his; and marvel at the fact that these two people created me, with my crooked teeth and fiery temper.

BRITANY FOSTER (12)

Dawn

The thick sheet seeps through,
Crawling over lakes and hills,
Fog rests, morning comes.

MARYANNE WARNER (10)



ALISSA SWEARINGEN (12)

Grateful

When they brought me home from the hospital, he thought I was a doll, and so he tried to smash me. He tried to pull my fingers and toes off. He realized I was a person, and so he taught me how to scream. Then we screamed together. We chased the dog together. We had the chicken pox together. She was born. Dad took us to the hospital to see her. He was seven he remembers; I was four-and-a-half and remember the pizza we ate afterwards, but I don't remember her. It was my turn to try and pull her fingers and toes off. He and I played with her; we entertained her when she was a baby, and teased her when she was a toddler. We laughed at her toddler speech. We laughed hysterically

when she said "bulture" instead of vulture, and "curl" instead of color. I didn't understand why Mom was sad when she ate rat poison; I don't know if he did it, but she was okay; Mom stopped being sad. We played rowdy games until Mom would separate us, or Dad would yell at us. While the construction workers were remodeling the house, we played in the rocks, and the red dirt, and the fiberglass insulation. We realized fiberglass was made of glass, and our hands hurt. We played with creek slime. We left it by the house and forgot about it; it started to smell, and Mom made us clean up "The Dinner." When the thick beige carpet replaced the flat red carpet, we shuffled our house slippers, on it, then jumped and touched the metal bars on the ceiling; I could make blue sparks fly out.

We all got older and stopped having fun together. We hid each others' toys. We all made fun of each other, although he and I would become allies to tease her, or to be nice to her, or to watch a "Star Wars" movie. He liked sports; I liked art and reading. She had a broken leg, and we were nice to her. He left my school, and she started my school. I thought he was a dumb boy; he thought I was annoying girl. I thought she was an annoying girl; she thought I was neat, and he was really neat. We were the big kids. We got to stay up late. We could read.

Then she could read, and I left her school. I went from one school to another. I wasn't very happy, and then I was happy. She was really smart and changed schools. His friends and my friends played German spotlight. It was cool for us to be around boys. He could drive; his friends could drive. He and I rode in his friend's convertible. It was cool for me to be around them, I became truly happy. He liked sports. He ran well, and had surgery to help him stop hurting so he could run better; it made him run worse, though. He had friends and felt cooler around them than he did around us. He worked. I didn't see him much.

He got too old to live with us, and we drove him away. The ride there was just like our vacations had always been. We got sick of riding in the car for hours with the same people. We hated Dad's music, we were hungry; the restrooms were dirty; when would we be there? We fought; "Those are bats!!" "No, dork, they're birds." "Why would birds be out at night?" We got there and unpacked. We looked around his new home. This would be his last school. She was younger and would grow up without us. I was closer to his age; I would miss him a lot. He and I had a pillow fight the night before we left him. I think I won. Half of us left the next day.

She and I still live here. He will come home sometimes. He calls us on the phone. I wonder if he remembers the blue sparks. I wonder if he remembers the Ewoks. I wonder if he remembers "The Dinner." I don't want to ask him if he remembers. If he doesn't I might cry. I wonder if she'll miss me. I still think she is a baby. In the picture she wears yellow pajamas. She is a baby and sits in his lap. He is missing his top two front teeth. I have stars and a moon on my shirt. All of us are smiling, even the new baby. I cry. I miss us. I'm glad God gave me them to grow up with.

LAURA GUENGERICH (12)

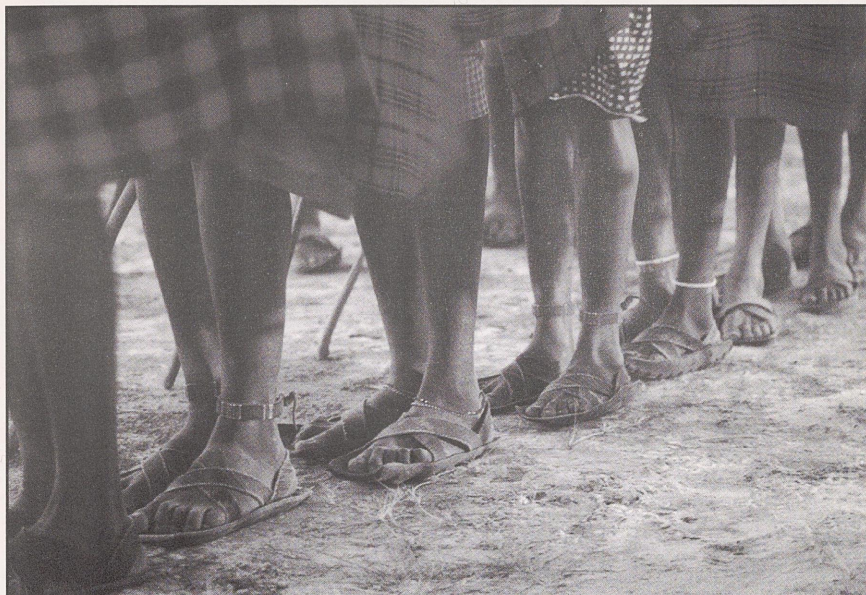
Were you there when the blackberries hit the fan?
I think you were, I think you were window-watching.
He grabbed them and flung them and tipped the bowl over
That thick black stuff exploded like I imagine a virgin would,
it shackled the room with dark, it ran between the hinges
and into the cracks. His hands are perfect for crushing things,
soft and breakable ones, that magnify his fists until they are
giants, like horrible cartoons or a fever dream- that catch me
screaming more times than the shadows do. "You sick thing"-
you watch from the windows play safe from windows.
It's always windows with you. Will you ever
crawl inside my crawl space to smell these fetid breaths, hot, heavy?
The blackberries, or what remains of their once-fleshed purple,-
cover me, drip onto my head, run into my eyes and onto my lips.
I can't taste them on my tongue
when He is hanging there (Hangman)
to see if I will give him a satisfied smile, a girl with shiny hair smile.
Honeyed black violet juice, you, Windowboy,
know that I can't show how disgustingly good it tastes.
I will wait impatiently until November (tap my fingers on the stumps)
when the blackberries taste nice and sour and it is too cold for you
to hover there looking in with your eyes skinned over.

LAUREN O'NEIL (12)

Where

It was in that place that I first heard
the colors of the sky,
And in that grass that I could taste
the wind go flying by.
It was by that brook that I could touch
the music of the sun,
and in that place that I could see
what magic had begun.

MARIA GUMINA (10)



HOLLY HOLTON (12)

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